

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-implemented method of retrieving
product distribution information comprising:
5 (a) storing first relationship information and
 second relationship information, said
 relationship information identifying a
 buyer, a seller and a product to be
 provided from said seller to said buyer,
10 (b) said first relationship information
 identifying a first entity as said buyer,
 a second entity as said seller, and a
 first product as said product,
15 (c) said second relationship information
 identifying said second entity as said
 buyer, a third entity as said seller, and
 said first product as said product,
 (d) retrieving said first relationship
 information,
 (e) retrieving said second relationship
20 information based on the identity of said
 seller and the identity of said product
 contained in said first relationship
 information.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said class is the general public.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of retrieving said first relationship information comprises 5 displaying to said first entity at least two products associated with those relationships identifying said first entity as said buyer, and determining said first relationship information based upon the product selected by an entity of said class.

10. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing a description of said product.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said description comprises an image, a textual description, or an image and a textual description.

15. 12. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

(a) said first entity requesting said first product from said second entity and storing said request,

20 (b) storing a request for said first product by said second entity to said third entity based on the second relationship information retrieved

during said step of retrieving said second relationship information.

13. The method of claim 12 further comprising notifying said third entity of said request.

5 14. The method of claim 12 wherein said requests includes the quantity of said product.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein said requests include the shipping destination or destinations of said product.

10 16. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of retrieving said second relationship information comprises searching for relationships wherein the buyer of the relationship identifies the seller of said first relationship and the product of the relationship 15 identifies the product of said first relationship.

17. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of storing additional relationships associated with said product; repeating said step of retrieving said second relationship by recursively assuming that some of 20 the values of said first relationship are equal to the values of said second relationship.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein said step of repeating terminates when there is no relationship

identifying the seller of said second relationship as a buyer of the same product in another relationship.

19. A computer-implemented method of providing information about a product including typesetting comprising:

- (a) storing data representing a product available from a first member to a class of customers, said product including typesetting;
- 10 (b) storing data representing an agreement by a second member to provide said product to said first member;
- (c) receiving a customer request from a customer of said class of customers for said product, said customer request including typesetting information describing said typesetting;
- 15 (d) storing said customer request;
- (e) retrieving said agreement based on the identity of said product and said first member associated with said customer request;

(f) generating a second request that said second member provide said product to said first member, said second request identifying said typesetting information;

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(g) transmitting said second request to said second member.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said class of customers comprises a single entity.

10 21. The method of claim 19 further comprising storing data representing an agreement by a third member to provide said product to said second member; retrieving said agreement by said third member based on the identity of said product and the identity of said second member.

15 22. The method of claim 21 wherein said typesetting information comprises an image.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprising the steps of receiving a plurality of requests from a plurality of customers of said class of customers, and
20 wherein the image associated with one customer request is different from the image associated with another customer request.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said step of storing said customer requests from said customers

comprises storing said different images in the same file format.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising the step of said second member retrieving said image.

5 26. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of converting said image from said file format to a different file format before said step of said second member retrieving said image.

27. The method of claim 23 wherein said step
10 of storing said customer requests from said customers comprises storing said different images in different file formats.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said different file formats correspond with file formats used
15 by said members.

29. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of manufacturing said product.

30. The method of claim 19 wherein said product is a stamp and said typesetting relates to the
20 impression on said stamp.

31. The method of claim 19 wherein said requests identify said typesetting information by reference to information stored in a database.

32. The method of claim 19 wherein said step of receiving said customer request comprises receiving said customer request over a global telecommunications network.

5 33. A computer-implemented method of retrieving information comprising:

- (a) storing first relationship information and second relationship information, said relationship information identifying a buyer, a seller and a first product provided from said seller to said buyer,
- (b) said first relationship information identifying a first entity as said buyer, a second entity as said seller, and a first product as said product,
- 10 (c) said second relationship information identifying said second entity as said buyer, a third entity as said seller, and a second product as said product,
- 15 (d) retrieving said first relationship information,

(e) retrieving said second relationship information based on the identity of said seller identified in said first relationship information.

5 34. A system for storing information about buyers and sellers of products comprising:

- (a) a database containing a plurality of relationship records, each said relationship record identifying a buyer, a 10 seller and a product provided from said seller to said buyer,
- (b) a processor for retrieving a second relationship record based on a first relationship record, whereby said buyer 15 entity identified in said second relationship record is the same entity as the seller identified in said second relationship record, and whereby said product identified in said second relationship record is related to said 20 product identified in said first relationship record.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein database is stored at a central location.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein said database is stored in a single server.

37. A system for storing information about relationships between buyers and sellers, said system
5 maintained by an administrator, said system comprising:

10 (a) data representing an agreement by a middle entity to provide a product to a bottom entity in exchange for compensation and an agreement by a top entity to provide a related product to said middle entity in exchange for compensation, none of said entities being said administrator, and

15 (b) a processor for utilizing said data to process a request for said product from said bottom entity to said middle entity such that said request generates a request for said product from said middle entity to said top entity.

20 38. The system of claim 37 wherein said data further comprises another agreement by another entity to provide said product to said top entity.

39. A computer-implemented method of retrieving information relating to a request for personalized products, said method comprising:

- (a) storing an agreement by a second entity to provide a product to a first entity,
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- (b) storing an agreement by a third entity to provide said product to said second entity,
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- (c) said first entity requesting said product from said second entity such that the request includes modifying the product in accordance with personalization information provided by said first entity, said personalization information being particular to said first entity, and
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- (d) generating a request for said product from said second entity to third entity based on said stored agreements, said request from said second entity to said third entity including said personalization information.
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40. The method of claim 39 wherein said personalization information comprises an image.

41. A computer-implemented method of selling products over the world-wide web, said method comprising:

- 5 (a) providing a database centrally storing agreements between a plurality of members to sell a product;
- 10 (b) sending a web page from a first member to a customer, said web page identifying a product that is the subject of one of said agreements of said database;
- 15 (c) receiving a request for said product from said customer, said request including an image provided by said customer;
- 20 (d) generating a first purchase order from said first member to a second member based on a second agreement stored in said database, said purchase order including said image, and

(e) generating a second purchase order from said second member to a third member based on a third agreement stored in said database, said purchase order including said image.

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42. The method of claim 41 further comprising the step of said members storing said agreements by sending information relating to such agreement to said database.

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43. The method of claim 41 wherein said product comprises a stamp having an impression representing said image.

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44. The method of claim 41 wherein said product comprises a printed item or sign containing said image.

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